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## THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN JUDAISM.

## III.

## THE HAMBURG TEMPLE AGAIN.

WHILE the Geiger-Tiktin controversy was at its height another struggle between the two wings of Jewish thought was waged in a locality that had been a field of battle in this conflict once before. In the year 1841 the Hamburg Temple became a storm-centre a second time. In the twenty-three years that had elapsed since its organization this congregation had maintained itself as a distinct association. After the exciting incidents attending its formation<sup>1</sup> the congregation had been left in comparative peace and had been less in the public gaze. In November, 1841, however, a keen and competent observer, Dr. Samuel Holdheim, who had attended the services at the Temple, published an account of his impressions<sup>2</sup>. He declared flatly and unreservedly that "the temple is undeniably the most important incident in the history of culture in Judaism," and stated that it stood for the purely religious idea as opposed to the nationalistic and that its great service consisted in giving practical demonstration of the fact that Judaism is capable of progress and development. A number of events conspired together just about this time to direct pronounced attention, once again, to this pioneer reform congregation. It had grown greatly in membership so that it was found necessary to enlarge its place of worship. The two decades which had passed from the time it had been called into being had witnessed a development of thought among the

<sup>1</sup> *J. Q. R.*, XV, 508 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Israelitische Annalen*, III, 353, 362.

reformers, and therefore it was found expedient to revise the prayer-book used by the congregation and to issue it in a new edition. As in 1818 the prayer-book of the congregation had aroused the opposition of the rabbis of the old school and had caused the first decided clash between the rabbinical and the reform parties, so in 1841 it was again the prayer-book in its revised form which became the bone of contention. Before entering into a detailed account of this, however, it is necessary to indicate briefly the changes wrought in various localities during the years bounded by the two occurrences wherein this pioneer reform congregation occupied the centre of the stage of Jewish attention. In 1818 when the Hamburg congregation was formed, not one established congregation in Europe had been touched by the modern spirit; in 1841 when the new edition of its prayer-book appeared, this modern spirit had made its influence felt in many quarters with more or less pronounced results. There can, in truth, be no doubt that the spirit of progress which was embodied in the Hamburg congregation was at work in many places, and although no other congregation had labelled itself "reformed," still was the influence of the new learning and culture thrown into the scale for reforms of some sort. The programme adopted by the Vienna congregation in 1826 became the model for many other congregations; this programme included German sermons, music by selected choir, decorum in the service; the Viennese congregation owed its great influence to the two men who stood at its head, Isaac Noa Mannheimer, the illustrious preacher, and Solomon Sulzer, the celebrated cantor. Although not a reform congregation in any sense when judged by changes in doctrine or in the content of the prayers, yet its programme seemed to satisfy the religious needs of such as desired to see the body of tradition clothed in a garb acceptable to the modern age. This Vienna programme was adopted by congregations in Bohemia<sup>1</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> *A. Z. d. J.*, I, 44, III, 637; *Isr. Ann.*, III, 14, 53.

Hungary<sup>1</sup>, Wurtemberg<sup>2</sup>, the Palatinate<sup>3</sup>; also by the congregations of Amsterdam<sup>4</sup>, Copenhagen<sup>5</sup>, Munich<sup>6</sup>, Mayence<sup>7</sup>, Bernburg<sup>8</sup>, Karlsruhe<sup>9</sup>, Bingen<sup>10</sup>, and other places.

Governmental edicts touching this matter of Jewish customs and services also indicate the tendencies of the period; in 1835 Alexius Frederick Christian, the Duke of Anhalt, issued a set of instructions to the chief rabbi of the duchy, in which this official was bidden to take steps to "remove all abuses which had crept into the synagogue and all non-essentials which, on the one hand, obscure the true Mosaic religion and morality, and, on the other, lead to contentions in the house of worship and in the congregation<sup>11</sup>." The thirty-second article of the decree of 1837, regulating the affairs of the Jews of the kingdom of Hanover, ordered that "a sermon in German be delivered on every Sabbath and holiday by the rabbi or such other functionary as may be at the head of synagogal affairs<sup>12</sup>." In Baden a decree of 1838 demanded the introduction of chorals into the service of the synagogues<sup>13</sup>; this had been commanded as early as 1824<sup>14</sup> but had not been respected; the reiterated decree was obeyed. The shifting attitude of the Bavarian government in this matter of Jewish reforms is interesting; in 1834 some Jews of Baireuth lodged complaint with the government against the rabbis who had eliminated from the liturgy certain prayers, which according to their opinion expressed no longer the true aspirations of the modern worshipper. The government sided with the rabbis, but decreed at the same time that such individuals as desired to pray these prayers, at home privately could do so<sup>15</sup>; in 1835, in the month of

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., I, 190; Loew, *Gesammelte Schriften*, II, 291.

<sup>2</sup> *Isr. Ann.*, I, 213.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 228.

<sup>4</sup> *A. Z. d. J.*, III, 394.

<sup>5</sup> *Isr. Ann.*, I, 95.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 51.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>8</sup> *Wiss. Zeitschrift für jüd. Theologie*, I, 475.

<sup>9</sup> *Isr. Ann.*, I, 413, II. 127; Loew, *Ges. Schr.*, II, 295.

<sup>10</sup> *Isr. Ann.*, I, 142.

<sup>11</sup> *Wiss. Zeit. für jüd. Theol.*, I, 465.

<sup>12</sup> *A. Z. d. J.*, I, 63.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., III, 26.

<sup>14</sup> *Isr. Ann.* II, 38.

<sup>15</sup> *Wiss. Zeit. für jüd. Theol.*, I, 125.

November, the government issued a decree calling for assemblies of Jewish representatives in all the districts of the country to discuss and to determine upon all points of belief and practice concerning which there were decided differences of opinion among Jews. In accordance with this decree a number of these district synods were held, one of which declared that the belief in the coming of the Messiah is to be taken in the spiritual not the political sense, that the Jews do not expect a return to Palestine nor the re-establishment of the Jewish state; the synod, therefore, resolved to remove from the prayer-book all passages petitioning for the coming of the Messiah and the return to Palestine<sup>1</sup>; this decree of 1835 seemed to be animated by the liberal spirit, as was also the governmental edict of 1838 issued to the congregations of Middle Franconia<sup>2</sup>; however an edict of October 23, 1838 (repeated December 31, 1839), indicates that the orthodox party had gained the ear of the government, for this edict declares that the king desires the appointment of rabbis who are thoroughly cultured but who are at the same time strict adherents "of all genuine Mosaic doctrines and ceremonies, and who discountenance all destructive neology<sup>3</sup>." This same reactionary attitude on the part of the government appears in a decree of July 22, 1840, which forbade the continued observance of the ceremony of confirmation which had been introduced by Dr. Löwi, the rabbi of Fuerth<sup>4</sup>.

A decree promulgated in the Duchy of Saxe-Meiningen, in December, 1839, comprising instructions to the district rabbis is interesting; it commands these rabbis to conduct the services in accordance with the essentials of the Mosaic religion and the needs of the time, to remove from the public services and the religious instruction everything which is unessential and objectionable. The fifth para-

<sup>1</sup> *Theologische Gutachten über das Gebetbuch nach dem Gebrauche des neuen israelitischen Tempelvereins zu Hamburg* (Hamburg, 1842), 71.

<sup>2</sup> *A. Z. d. J.*, III, 34.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 64.

<sup>4</sup> *Isr. Ann.*, II, 284, 290.

graph orders that a German sermon be delivered every two weeks, and the eighth paragraph instructs the rabbi to promote the improvement of the services in all the congregations of his district, to remove abuses, to have more and more of the prayers read in German, to establish choirs, to have the prayers and the Pentateuchal readings pronounced in a dignified manner in place of the traditional sing-song, and to abolish the selling of the *mitzwoth*. The decree also commanded the conducting of the confirmation ceremony yearly<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand Prussia had re-enforced the decree of 1823, forbidding any changes or innovations in the Jewish service, by two subsequent decrees of May 25, 1829, and October 25, 1836.

Thus the currents moved to and fro. The Jewish communities were being constantly stirred by the agitations. A striking instance of how wide spread the movements against the old order were is offered by a remarkable address issued by fifty-four Jews of Wilna in September, 1840, to their co-religionists in Russian Poland; this document urged improvements in the religious condition of the Jews and declared that the evils were superinduced by three causes; first, the incompetency of the rabbis and teachers who were for the most part ignorant, "understood no intelligible language, possessed no scientific training, were absolutely inexperienced in worldly matters . . . made no efforts to improve manners and morals, to spread true enlightenment, to incline their people to participate in the general welfare of the community or to impress upon them the necessity for the pursuit of industrial and agricultural pursuits"; secondly, the neglect of the instruction of the young, and thirdly, the superstitions and the divisions caused by the Sabbatian and Chassidaic movements. These evils, they declared, could be remedied only by the foundation of a rabbinical seminary where rabbis would receive a scientific Jewish education combined with secular learning; in the meantime "let German rabbis

<sup>1</sup> *A. Z. d. J.*, IV, 21; *Isr. Ann.*, II, 11.

who are versed in the Talmud and in branches of secular knowledge be elected as district rabbis and teach the religion in its purity . . . ; let these rabbis form a consistory with its seat in the place where the seminary is located, this consistory to conduct all religious and congregational affairs, regulate the public worship<sup>1</sup>," &c. Although religious reform as such is not mentioned in this address yet it testifies to the longing for changes and improvements even in such communities as have been supposed by many not to have been affected in any way by the modern spirit.

I desire also to call attention to two remarkable individual expressions as a further indication of the character of the period under consideration. In a *lettre pastorale*, addressed in 1835 to the rabbis and the faithful in his district, Arnaud Aron, the newly elected *grand rabbin* of the Strasburg consistory, used the following language after speaking of such as condemn and disregard their ancestral faith; "Avoid the course of those other Israelites whose blind faith poisons the present generation with another serious evil no less disastrous in its results. Refusing for themselves all higher culture, at whose door they lay all blame for the ills of unbelief, they remain sunk in the lethargy of moral disintegration. Deaf to the cry of the progressive enlightenment of humanity they never cease to bow their head beneath the yoke of abasement, clinging obstinately, at the same time, to the prejudices which, in their eyes, are the only stay of the religion of their fathers<sup>2</sup>"; and the author of the famous Tsarphati letters wrote in 1836: "let us observe the Sabbath, the feast of the creation, but let us change the day; let us keep the divine covenant, let us change the manner; let us emancipate woman, she is part of human kind. Let us preserve our collections of prayers, the magnificent songs of the Psalmist, but let us change the idiom; let us intro-

<sup>1</sup> A. Z. d. J., V, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Wiss. Zeit. für jüd. Theol., I, 271.

duce successively Protestant preaching, the Catholic organ, the harmonies of the Meyerbeers, the Halevis<sup>1</sup>."

After this somewhat hurried survey of the changes effected in Jewish religious practice and thought during the interim of twenty-three years between the publication of the first and second edition of the Hamburg prayer-book, I return to the interrupted narrative. The passing of the years had made it evident that the first edition of the book could not be considered final; when this first edition was wellnigh exhausted, the directory of the Temple appointed a commission, in April, 1839, consisting of the two rabbis, Drs. Gotthold Salomon and Eduard Kley, and three members of the congregation, Dr. M. Fränkel, M. J. Bresselau and M. Wolfson, to revise the prayer-book in view of the new edition which was to be issued, it being provided that "the principle of revision shall conform to that spirit of contemporary progress which has ruled in our house of worship up to this time." The resignation of Dr. Kley as rabbi of the temple caused his withdrawal from the commission and the appointment of his successor, Dr. Naphtali Frankfurter, in his stead and the vacancy caused by the death of M. J. Bresselau, the secretary of the congregation, was filled by his successor, M. M. Haarbleicher. The commission was instructed to revise the prayer-book but not to prepare an entirely new ritual. The commission was guided by the following four principles:—

1. The prayer-book, which aims to be the expression of a religious community that rests on a positive historical foundation, must not only uplift and edify the spirit of the worshipper, as does every prayer-book, but it must

<sup>1</sup> Conservons le Sabbat, fête de la création, changeons le jour; conservons l'alliance céleste, changeons le mode; émancipons la femme, elle fait part du genre humain. Conservons nos assemblées de prières, les magnifiques cantiques du Psalmiste, changeons l'idiome; introduisons successivement la prédication Protestante, l'orgue catholique, les accords des Meyerbeer, des Halévi.—Ibid., IV, 259.



indicate that positive foundation in its peculiarity as it appears in doctrine and history.

2. Spirit and heart must be addressed in a manner as compatible as possible with the modern status of European culture and views of life.

3. The existing and traditionally received material is to be retained preferentially, as long as it does not controvert the requirements indicated above.

4. The entire content of the prayer-book, as well as of the whole service, must be permeated with the pure teaching of our ancestral religion ; whatsoever opposes this must be removed<sup>1</sup>.

The commission was guided too much by the spirit of compromise ; as was the case with the first edition of the prayer-book so also in the revision, there were no fixed guiding principles ; in defence of their course the commission claimed that "had they been truly and fully consistent they would have had a book true to principle, but they would have had no congregation ; even in the most favourable case their congregation would have become entirely isolated from the rest of the Jewish community" ; therefore they took the middle course and avoided extremes.

Still despite this, their expectation was not fulfilled. The book appeared about the same time that the Temple, owing to the growth of the membership, was enlarged. For twenty years the congregation had grown and prospered and comparative peace had reigned between it and the orthodox community. These two events, however, the new addition to the Temple and the new edition of the prayer-book, stirred the latent opposition into flame, and were the signals for the new agitation which caused this congregation to occupy the central place in the religious life of German Jewry a second time and stamped it as the particular representative of the reform cause. The ecclesiastical chief of the orthodox community, the

<sup>1</sup> *Theologische Gutachten über das Gebetbuch nach dem Gebrauche des neuen israelitischen Tempelvereins in Hamburg*, Introd. 10, 11.

so-called Chakham, Isaac Bernays, issued a public notice (מודעה) warning all Israelites not to use this book and declaring that any one who did so did not perform his duty as a Jew. This document appeared on October 16, 1841, two months after the publication of the prayer-book. It was promulgated far and wide and the Temple authorities found it necessary to answer it; on October 21 they published the following declaration, which was signed by J. Warendorff, temporary president, Dr. G. Riesser, Dr. M. Fränkel and E. J. Jonas: "Since Mr. Isaac Bernays has deemed it proper to declare in the local synagogues that our prayer-book violates the fundamental principles of the Jewish religion, the directorate of the new temple association, after due consultation with its preachers, considers it incumbent upon itself to declare, both to the members of our association and to all who attend our services:

1. Mr. Isaac Bernays has no authority, as far as our organization is concerned, to condemn us publicly as he has; hence this condemnation is to be spurned as unseemly.

2. A malicious, intentional disregard of the contents of the prayer-book is apparent in the judgment given; the accusations moreover evince the densest ignorance of all theologico-liturgical knowledge.

3. Therefore such a proceeding can affect in nowise the members of the Temple Society who recognize in it only the expression of powerless partisanship; they regret it, because the seed of discord has been sown in the congregation in so wanton a manner and because the cloak of religion has been used to cover such a course.

Still this statement did not end the controversy; indeed it proved only the beginning. True, by an order of the Senate of Hamburg, of January 12, 1842, the מודעה was removed from the synagogues; the Temple authorities had removed their counter-declaration some time before. In place of the מודעה the Chacham substituted a Caution (אזהרה): "it is forbidden to pray the obligatory prayers

and benedictions from the book which appeared here during the past year entitled 'Prayers for Israelites.'" The public notice and the caution of Chakham Bernays attracted such widespread attention that the directorate of the Temple considered it necessary to obtain the opinions of recognized Jewish theological authorities on the question as to whether the prayer-book justified the condemnation of the Chakham as being a non-Jewish prayer-book, implied in his statement that any one using it did not perform his duty as an Israelite; they obtained responses from twelve well-known rabbis: J. Aub of Baireuth, J. L. Auerbach of Leipzig, A. Chorin of Arad, J. A. Friedländer of Brilon, Abraham Geiger of Breslau, M. Gutmann of Redwitz, S. Holdheim of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, A. Kohn of Hohenems, J. Maier of Stuttgart, I. N. Mannheimer of Vienna, L. Philippson of Magdeburg, and L. Stern of Burgkunstadt. The two rabbis of the temple, Drs. G. Salomon<sup>1</sup> and N. Frankfurter<sup>2</sup>, had expressed their views in separate publications shortly before. In the preface to the volume containing these responses, the directorate, through their spokesman Dr. M. Fränkel, state that "twelve theological opinions are more than sufficient to outweigh two ungrounded declarations and to prove their instability. Time has passed judgment on the rabbis of 1819. Had we desired we could have increased the number, if we had wished to address all Jewish theologians who combine piety with a free scientific spirit. The directorate of the temple wished to exclude no worthy rabbi; they addressed a certain number of theologians known to them with the hope that others would voluntarily join the number."

The twelve opinions were preceded by an introduction in two parts written by Dr. Fränkel; the first part giving the history of the controversy and the second being a disquisition on the Temple Society, its reason for existence,

<sup>1</sup> *Das neue Gebetbuch und seine Verketzerung; sine ira et cum studio* (Hamburg, 1841).

<sup>2</sup> *Stillstand und Fortschritt* (Hamburg, 1841).

its place in the religious life of the day and its relation to Judaism at large<sup>1</sup>.

One of the chief charges advanced against the prayer-book was that it denied leading Jewish doctrines, notably the doctrines of the Messiah, the bodily resurrection and the eventual redemption of Israel by the restoration to the land of Palestine. Dr. Salomon, the rabbi of the temple, at once published an essay, "The New Prayer-book and its Persecution," wherein he defended the orthodoxy of the book and cited accredited authorities with whose opinions the book was in perfect accord. On one point, however, he was forced to acknowledge the correctness of the charges, and that was in reference to the Messianic belief. The traditional belief was in the coming of the personal Messiah; the view expressed in the prayer-book was the hope for the coming of the Messianic time without any local reference and without the reinstitution of the sacrificial cult; this change of view necessitated certain alterations in the traditional form of the prayers; these alterations consisted for the most part in the elimination of those expressions which indicated these beliefs and hopes. However, even here vacillation was apparent; some prayers were retained which should have been struck out had the compilers of the book been truly consistent. Thus, on the one hand, they omitted such supplications as the following in the Mussaf of the holidays: "Gather together our dispersed from the four corners of the earth and assemble our exiled from the uttermost parts thereof and restore us with exultation to thy city Zion and to Jerusalem thy holy house, with everlasting joy," &c.; also this, "Build thy house as aforetimes and establish thy temple firmly and let us see its erection and gladden us with its restoration and bring

<sup>1</sup> Dr. G. Salomon, the preacher of the congregation, also issued a history of the same several years later under the title *Kurzgefasste Geschichte des neuen israelitischen Tempels in Hamburg während der ersten 25 Jahre seines Bestehens* (Hamburg, 1844).

back the priests to their ministrations, the Levites to their songs, the Israelites to their homes; thither will we pilgrim and appear before thee and prostrate ourselves on the three high feasts." The omission of such supplications seemed to indicate clearly the position of the congregation on this question of the return to Palestine, the reinstitution of the sacrifices, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the restoration of the Jewish state. They seemed to declare that they had repudiated Israel's nationalistic hopes and had given a purely spiritual interpretation to the Messianic idea, taking it in its universal meaning as the Messianic era of peace and justice. On the other hand, however, a number of the nationalistic prayers which supplicated for the coming of a personal Messiah and the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem were retained; for example, "let our eyes see thy return to Zion in mercy," and the prayer "that God take pity on his sanctuary, rebuild it in his love and increase its glory." Here was a manifest inconsistency; it looked like an attempt at compromise; on the one hand, the desire of the Jews to be considered citizens of the land in which they dwelt necessitated the repudiation of the belief in Palestine as their fatherland; on the other, the anxiety to remain in good repute as part and parcel of the whole community of Israel caused them to retain certain prayers which petitioned for the return of God to Zion. The compilers of the book felt this to be inconsistent, and Dr. Salomon in his defence of the book attempted to explain it away by declaring that the Temple congregation did believe in the restoration, but "it does not believe that the restoration is conditioned by the bodily personal presence of each and every Israelite in the land of Palestine. We can desire with all our hearts the re-establishment of an unfortunate fatherland, can even make supplication to God for this, and become enthusiastic for the idea; and together with this we can remain in the land wherein Divine Providence has placed us, continue to live there and obey, serve, and do allegiance to its

ruling powers." He instances the fact that many Jews remained in Babylon at the time of the return from the Babylonian exile. This explanation does not explain; it has all the appearance of begging the question. But one of two positions is possible in this matter, either the belief that the Jews everywhere are in a state of exile and will remain in this state until God in his own time will put an end to the exile and restore them to Palestine under the leadership of a personal Messiah, or the belief that the dispersion of the Jews over the world is providential, that nationally they are not distinct and have no national hopes other than those of their fellow citizens of other faiths, that the future of Judaism is to find its consummation not in the re-establishment of the Jewish state but in the fulfilment of the prophetic visions of universal peace and the universal acceptance of the unity of God. The one conception considers the repossession of Palestine the crowning of Israel's career, the other claims that Israel's early life in Palestine was the preparation for its larger work in all parts of the world during the dispersion. It is impossible to reconcile the two positions. They represent the parting of the ways in the interpretation of this vital doctrine, viz. the Messianic belief.

In his statement concerning the preparation of the prayer-book Dr. Fränkel, one of the compilers, pleaded guilty to the charge of inconsistency, but excused the commission on the ground that thorough-going consistency would have involved complete severance from the Jewish community at large; this they desired to avoid and therefore they sailed the middle course; the result proved disappointing; the orthodox chiefs condemned the book for its changes and emendations and declared it heretical, while, on the other hand, the congregation lost the opportunity of standing as a true leader, championing those new ideas for a bold and uncompromising declaration of which thousands were waiting. Instead of trying to justify their position as reformers the Temple authorities were

anxious to prove the acceptability of the prayer-book even from the traditional standpoint. There was a very general desire at this time to base the justification for reforms on the authority of the Talmud and the mediaeval rabbinical authorities. Passages were cited from these authorities in support of the reform position. Although done in perfectly good faith and sincerity, this was not quite honest, for neither the Talmudical nor the mediaeval authorities, when they gave utterance to the expressions quoted as justifying reforms contemplated or undertaken, had any such state of affairs in mind as existed in Jewry at this time. The conditions in Judaism were different from what they had ever been ; a veritable revolution had taken place, changing not only the external lot of the Jews in Germany and other western European lands but also the view-points in regard to all things ; even the modern culture and education of the Jews were opposed from the traditional rabbinical standpoint ; either the Hebrew education only or nothing was the shibboleth of the rabbis of the old school.

There being then this revolution affecting all provinces of Jewish life and thought a readjustment and reinterpretation were necessary ; there were many who held this theoretically ; in practice, however, the great constructive geniuses failed to appear, and the vital moment, the mother of the ages, was permitted to pass without being properly grasped. Therefore the reform movement in Germany failed to fulfil its promise, and Judaism, through the policy of compromise, halted between past and present ; and while the Jew himself became thoroughly occidentalized, the synagogue, outside of the United States<sup>1</sup>, remained oriental ; the cleft between the life of the Jew in the world and in the synagogue continued ; it was this cleft which the reform movement set out to remove, and in as far as it did not succeed in this it fell short of the realization of its

<sup>1</sup> See the author's "Progress of the Jewish Reform Movement in the United States," *J. Q. R.*, X, 52-99.

programme. The Hamburg congregation indicated the possibilities of a strong concerted movement, but it did not become what it might have been, the leader of such a mighty forward work. It obtained the opinions declaring the validity of its prayer-book even from the traditional Jewish standpoint, rested on its oars, and continued a single, isolated, individual congregation.

All the opinions published in the collection "Theological Opinions on the Prayer-book of the New Israelitish Temple Society in Hamburg" (*Theologische Gutachten über das Gebetbuch nach dem Gebrauche des neuen israelitischen Tempelvereins in Hamburg*, Hamburg, 1842) condemned Bernays' attitude toward the prayer-book without reservation. They all declared in different ways that the prayer-book conformed completely with the spirit of Judaism, and that any one who prayed from it performed his full duty as an Israelite. It is not necessary to quote these opinions at length or even in an abbreviated form, although they present an interesting array of facts and opinions on the very important question of the liturgy. It will be sufficient to reproduce here two of these opinions representative of the radical and conservative wings of Jewish thought, viz. the opinions of Samuel Holdheim the radical and Isaac Noa Mannheimer the conservative.

Immediately upon the appearance of the prayer-book Holdheim had published a review of it in pamphlet form with the title "The Prayer-book of the New Israelitish Temple in Hamburg" (*Ueber das Gebetbuch nach dem Gebrauche des neuen israelitischen Tempels zu Hamburg*, Hamburg, 1841). In this he declared that the prayer-book was entirely satisfactory and could be used in any Jewish congregation because it disparaged no historical truth, no essential doctrine of Judaism, no tradition of the synagogue, no universally acknowledged rabbinical nor any positive Biblical law. It steered the middle course and satisfied the progressive as well as the conservative party. Somewhat later he felt called upon to write a



second pamphlet in defence of the Temple and its prayer-book, entitled, "Heresy Hunting and Liberty of Conscience. A second vote" (*Verketzerung und Gewissensfreiheit: ein zweites Votum*, Schwerin, 1842), in answer to a violent anonymous attack "Jew and non-Jew. An answer to the Writings of the Triple Alliance" (*Jude und Nicht-Jude: eine Erwiderung auf die Schriften der Tripel-Allianz*, Amsterdam, 1842). The triple alliance referred to was Holdheim and the two preachers of the Temple, Salomon and Frankfurter, all three of whom had issued publications in defence of the prayer-book<sup>1</sup>.

In his opinion, published in the collection<sup>2</sup>, Holdheim averred that the book contained no changes from the traditional ritual that are subversive of the spirit of Judaism; the changes are only such as are necessitated by the development of the universal conception of Judaism out of the national; this change was given point to even in ancient time by the establishment of the synagogues as houses of prayer to take the place of the Temple at Jerusalem, the national religious centre. As for the spiritual interpretation which the authors of the prayer-book give to the Messianic belief, as contrasted with the personal and as affecting all mankind and not Israel alone, they deserve our thanks. They have accentuated the prophetic interpretation of the doctrine; they have succeeded in combining the traditional Jewish spirit with the universal teaching which is the finest flower of prophetic Judaism, and they have done well in eliminating from the prayer-book all those elements which are incompatible with the pristine teachings of the synagogue and with the spirit of modern culture.

Mannheimer<sup>3</sup>, the celebrated Viennese preacher, a man of a decidedly conservative tendency, declared that the per-

<sup>1</sup> *Supra*, p. 494.

<sup>2</sup> *Theol. Gutachten über das Gebetbuch nach dem Gebrauch des neuen israel. Tempelver. in Hamb.*, 73 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 94 ff.

mission to use the vernacular in place of the Hebrew as the language of prayer was indisputable even from the Talmudico-rabbinical standpoint. The excision, changing or recasting of the *piutim* and *selichoth*, is the prerogative of every congregation. It can be proven easily that the inclusion of the *piutim* in the ritual was disputed with much greater justice than is their exclusion to-day.

A number of prayers were simply the individual expressions of their authors and were never intended to have lasting validity and authority. Such are the late וְהוּא רַחוּם, the pentateuchal prayer for Mondays and Thursdays, the so-called יְהִי רִצּוֹן, the long drawn out confession of sins (עַל חַטָּא) in the ritual of the Day of Atonement; such and others like them can be either abbreviated or abolished without sinning against the rules of the ritual.

He goes on to say: "Although I usually plead for historical continuity and tradition yet I cannot but agree with the stand taken by the authors of the book in the matter of the omission of the prayers for the reinstitution of the sacrifices; they have merely expressed what all modern enlightened theologians think, even such as cling with all their hearts to the inherited traditions and forms; I am one of those who do not rationalize the Messianic belief; I believe in and defend the national interpretation of this dogma and hope for a national restoration, yet I am free to confess openly that the reinstitution of the bloody sacrificial ritual does not form part and parcel of these hopes and promises; see the many expressions of the prophets, the sages, and notably Maimonides, who declares that the sacrifices were intended only for the child-period of Israel's development. . . .

"If Bernays had contented himself with warning his own followers and all such as cling to the traditional ritual against the use of this prayer-book no one could have objected. But decided protest must be entered against the animus wherewith he attacks an honourable congregation that has pursued the highest ideals for the past

twenty-two years; such bigotry and one-sidedness cannot be condemned too strongly; the less that the rabbis of the school of Bernays have taken to heart the need of remodelling the service, and the more they have viewed with indifference the estrangement of thousands from the house of God, the less right have they to pretend to be zealous in the cause of God as over against such as have taken active steps to stem the tide of indifference and reclaim those who have drifted away."

One other opinion must be mentioned although it did not appear in the collection published by the Temple authorities. I refer to that<sup>1</sup> of Zacharias Frankel, chief rabbi of Dresden. Frankel, one of the foremost Jewish scholars and rabbis of the time, became known as the leading exponent of what he termed "positive historical Judaism"; he claimed to occupy the middle position between the reformers and the party of strict tradition. He condemned the action of Bernays, as he would any presumptuous attempt on the part of constituted authority to interfere with the spirit of progress. To his mind the prayer-book was open to criticism because the compilers had not been guided by any strict principle of procedure; they had exercised an unauthorized eclecticism in the omission and retention of prayers. He breaks a lance with the "templeites" on the Messianic question; here he is altogether at variance with them; he claims that the hope of the return to Palestine still had power to arouse the enthusiasm of the Jew and that a future independent existence was the true consummation of Israel's Messianic hopes. Still, in spite of his objections to the book, Frankel was frank to acknowledge that the intention and aim of the Hamburg congregation were honest, but he feared that its mode of procedure was schismatic.

Salomon answered this criticism in a caustic and ironical rejoinder<sup>2</sup>, in which he repeated his views on the Messianic

<sup>1</sup> Orient, 1842, Nos. 7, 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Sendschreiben an Herrn Dr. Zacharias Frankel in Betreff seines im "Orient"*

idea. Frankel replied, and set forth his thoughts on the question a second time at great length<sup>1</sup>. This then was really the pivot on which the reform movement was to revolve; if Judaism was a universal religion as the reformers claimed, then all things connected with the religion, as ceremonies, doctrines, and laws, must be interpreted in this light; the dead hand of the past must be removed and the present be given due and proper consideration as a vital factor in the development of the faith; if, however, Judaism was a national religion, then had the prophets dreamed vain things and uttered foolish babblings; the issue was becoming well defined; "either a common country or a common idea"; either Judaism had the power and potency of a world religion and could satisfy the spiritual aspirations of mankind, or it was fitted to be only the religious experience of a single race; the outlook of the reformers was the world, that of their opponents a corner of western Asia.

The practical result of all this agitation, as far as the Hamburg Temple congregation was concerned, was that it became more assured in its position as an independent congregation, and was permitted to pursue its course peaceably and quietly; on December 7, 1845, a commission was appointed by the congregation, consisting of the two rabbis, one member of the directorate, and four members of the congregation, to which were to be referred all matters pertaining to the public service and such private domestic functions as were of a religious nature; this commission was to bear in mind always the purpose of the temple organization, viz. "the combining of the spirit of the religious consciousness of the age with the historical spirit of Judaism."

*mitgetheilten Gutachtens über das neue Gebetbuch der Tempelgemeinde in Hamburg.* Hamburg, 1842.

<sup>1</sup> *Erweiterung auf das von Herrn Dr. Salomon, Prediger am neuen israelitischen Tempel zu Hamburg, an mich gerichtete Sendschreiben. Literaturblatt des Orients, 1842, Nos. 23 and 24.*

## THE REFORM MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND.

Our story of the movement for religious reform in Judaism has been confined thus far almost exclusively to Germany, but the movement spread beyond the borders of that country, and towards the close of the fourth and in the beginning of the fifth decade of the nineteenth century a stirring episode in the conflict between the old and new tendencies in Judaism was enacted in the British metropolis. Before giving a detailed account of this it will be necessary to indicate briefly the religious conditions in London at the time when the first official effort towards reform was made, viz. in the year 1836. As throughout Europe, the bulk of the Jews in London had, up to the nineteenth century, acquired but little if any education in secular branches of knowledge. They were cut off almost absolutely from all contact with the outer world, except in business relations involved in transactions on the Stock Exchange. The education of the great majority of the children was received in schools that were scarcely worthy the name. The Spanish and Portuguese congregation conducted a day school called "Shaare Tievah" (Gates of Hope), in which, according to the statement of a prominent member of the congregation, the boys "were taught little Hebrew and less English. For aught they knew Julius Caesar was a Lord Mayor of London some fifty years ago, the equator may be the name of a strange animal, and Alps and Pyrenees are, perhaps, two kinds of foreign fruit. And in this state of mind they leave the school where they are supposed to have been instructed for years, and enter the world, throwing upon the establishment and upon the authorities who look after them the greatest disgrace<sup>1</sup>." The Talmud Torah, the day school conducted by the German Polish congregation, was no better, being presided over by a *melammed*, himself

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Jewish Chronicle*, June 18, 1897, p. 17.

frequently ignorant and uncouth, who confined his teaching to Hebrew and the translation of the Bible into Yiddish. English was never heard in the schoolroom. Matters improved considerably with the organization of the Jews' Free School as a primary school in which secular branches also were taught. This was the beginning of the educational emancipation of the Jews of London from the régime of the *cheder* and the *melammed*, and all that these two institutions implied.

Religiously speaking, the Jews of London were divided into two communities, the Sephardi or Spanish-Portuguese and the Ashkenazi or German-Polish; the affairs of the Sephardi community, with its historic synagogue in Bevis Marks, were regulated by the *Mahamad*, or governing board, consisting of four wardens and the treasurer. The rule of the *Mahamad* was wellnigh despotic; it was almost an oligarchy. The mode of election of a member of the *Mahamad* was peculiar; the bulk of the members of the congregation, technically known as *Yehidim*, took no part in the election; whenever a vacancy occurred in this governing board, the remaining members of the *Mahamad*, together with eight ex-members, met for the purpose of filling the vacancy. Five of their number cast lots as to who should nominate a member of the congregation to serve as warden. If the meeting approved this nomination, it was equivalent to an election. Any one thus elected was compelled willy-nilly to serve or else pay a heavy fine, amounting to forty pounds.

Regulations similar in spirit, though not exactly like in form, prevailed in the German-Polish community, the head of which was a chief rabbi and a governing board, which was composed of the wardens and honorary officers.

The *Ascamoth*, or rules of the Spanish-Portuguese congregation, prescribed the course of life of the members not only within the synagogue but also without<sup>1</sup>. For example,

<sup>1</sup> Gaster, *History of the Ancient Synagogue of Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, 15, London, 1901.

no member of the congregation was permitted to bring any suit against another member in any court of law, civil or criminal, without first giving notice of it to the *Mahamad*; failure to comply with this regulation involved the payment of a fine of five pounds. The only exception to this was a suit in which "delay might prove prejudicial," or one arising from failure to meet a Bill of Exchange. Further, the members were forbidden to publish any book treating of religion or politics in any language without the permission of the *Mahamad*; they were also forbidden to join any party "which any of the people may form against the government or ministry or judicial administration of the kingdom<sup>1</sup>."

These rules, as a matter of course, date back to the time when the Jews were a tolerated alien community, and great care had to be exercised lest any suspicion of any kind attach to any one of their number as being opposed to the powers that were, or sympathizing with any sentiment or movement against them. The rules of the German synagogue did not attempt to interfere with the political opinions or activity of the members, but disputes between members of the synagogue were brought frequently before the governing board and settled without recourse to the courts of the land.

Such rules and regulations were possible of enactment and enforcement because the Jews were to all intents and purposes a separate community—or really two separate communities—and could continue in force only so long as this remained the case; this jurisdiction of the synagogue over the public activities of its members had to cease with the letting down of the barriers that excluded the Jews from participation in the civil and political activities of the country. At the time whereof I am writing the agitation for the civil emancipation of the Jews had been renewed. In 1753 a bill for the emancipation of the Jews had passed both Houses of Parliament, but had been repealed at the

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, June 11, 1897, p. 12.

instance of the populace ; since then the bill had been introduced into the Lower House several times, but in 1831 most determined steps were taken by Robert Grant, Lord Macaulay, and other famous members of Parliament ; the bill had passed in the Commons but was defeated in the House of Lords ; the friends of the measure never ceased agitating for it from that time onward until it was finally passed in the House of Lords in 1858, and thus became a law of the land.

All these movements for educational and civil emancipation worked together just as was the case in Germany, and there can be no doubt but that the spirit of freedom which called these activities into play made itself felt also in the religious life, and gave a great impetus to the sentiment of dissatisfaction with the conditions in the synagogue which had received occasional expression even before the organization of the reform congregation.

Furthermore, the influence of the movement for reform in Germany must be taken into account. That this influence was of moment in the agitation for religious reform in England may be gathered from the first official mention we have of the movement in that country among the members of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation. A petition was presented to the *Mahamad* on December 4, 1836, by a number of the members, asking for the introduction into the service of "such alterations and modifications as were in the line of the changes introduced in the reform synagogue in Hamburg and other places<sup>1</sup>." Some time before this, however, in the year 1812, a member of this congregation, J. King by name, had addressed the wardens, calling attention to the indecorum during the services and claiming that as matters stood the synagogue "was not a place of devotion and prayers could be better said in the closet." He called upon the officers to introduce reforms, but his suggestions received scant consideration, as

<sup>1</sup> Gaster, *History of the Ancient Synagogue of Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, p. 169.



did also subsequent communications which he addressed to them on the same subject<sup>1</sup>. Sixteen years later, on December 4, 1828, a committee for the Promotion of Religious Worship was appointed to inquire into and recommend the best means of raising the tone of the public service and infusing therein greater decorum and devotion; the committee suggested a number of measures to this end; they recommended that the *Mahamad* take steps to shorten the service as far as practicable, but the most interesting portion of their report is that in which they declared that moral and religious discourses were essential, and therefore they urged that an English sermon be delivered every Saturday afternoon and its text be taken from Scripture; this suggestion was acted upon and such sermons were delivered for some years, beginning in 1831, the preacher being the Rev. D. A. de Sola, but then this practice was discontinued until a later day<sup>2</sup>.

In May, 1821, a number of prominent members of the chief Ashkenazi synagogue, surnamed the Great, called the attention of the officers of the congregation to the indecorum that prevailed during the public worship; they claimed that this was caused in great part by the prolonged *Misheberakh* (benedictions for money offerings), and petitioned that this portion of the service be shortened, for, wrote they, "it is pitiful to behold how indecently our solemn services are hurried on, particularly during the sacred holidays, in order to allow time for a system of finance, which, however beneficial in its operation, is certainly inconsistent with decorum and public order." In 1824 a committee of the vestry of this same synagogue recommended some improvements in the mode of reading the service; although the recommendations were acted on, the evils complained of did not abate. In 1832 the Hambro synagogue abolished the sale of the *mitzwoth*, but the hope of such as desired to see the *Misheberakh*

<sup>1</sup> Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History*, p. 302, London, 1875.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 326.

abrogated was not fulfilled except in the case of the reform synagogue which was founded in 1841, as shall be set forth shortly.

There had been agitations for reforms in Manchester which led to the introduction of preaching in the vernacular in this congregation in 1838<sup>1</sup>.

This desire for reform in England was due to the fact that Judaism here, as elsewhere, had fallen out of touch with many, to whom the services in the synagogue seemed disorderly and unedifying. At this time the Spanish and Portuguese congregation had no *Haham*, as the spiritual chief of this community was designated; no successor had been elected to H. H. Meldola, who had died in 1828; his son, David Meldola, was appointed chief of the *Beth Din*; the chief rabbi of the German community was Solomon Herschel, a typical rabbi of the old school, unacquainted with English or any modern learning. He had occupied the position since 1802<sup>2</sup>. He preached twice a year in Yiddish, on the Sabbath before the Feast of Passover and on the Sabbath of the Penitential season, expounding the laws for the holidays. Both these men did all in their power to prevent the successful outcome of the active efforts for reform which, beginning with the petition of December 4, 1836<sup>3</sup>, resulted in the formation of the reform congregation. This petition called forth a counter-petition from forty-five *Yehidim* on December 13, protesting against any reforms. The elders, and in fact the majority of the congregation, being in sympathy with the framers of the counter-petition, the memorial of the members who advocated the alterations met with little sympathy, although the elders, in the resolution which they passed discountenancing reform, credited them with purity of motive and intention. The same cry as is

<sup>1</sup> Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, X, Part II, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> H. Adler, *The Chief Rabbis of England*, in *Papers read at the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition*, 1887, p. 287, London, 1888.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*.

always raised in similar circumstances was emitted also here; it was urged that such changes would split Judaism into sects; this argument carried especial weight in England, for there, as everywhere, the Jews are affected by their surroundings, and the doctrine of conformity to an established church which represents the prevailing religious attitude in England reacted and reacts without a doubt upon the Jews, and for that reason it has been so difficult for reform to gain a foothold in Anglo-Judaism. The petition of the reformers, however, had the effect of causing the elders to take steps to introduce better order into the services<sup>1</sup>.

But the wheels of progress could not be stopped by such obstacles nor were the reformers to be satisfied with such slight measures. Even the advocates of the established order understood this, and the next step in the campaign was taken by some very orthodox members who, in order to meet any further agitation for reform, organized a society which they called "*Shomere Mishmeret Akodesh*," and defined as a "society for supporting and upholding the Jewish religion as handed down to us by our revered ancestors and to prevent innovations or changes in any of its recognized forms and customs, unless sanctioned by the recognized authorities<sup>2</sup>." The elders of the synagogue evinced their impartiality by urging that this society be dissolved, on the ground that it was unnecessary and would only tend to promote disunion.

The reformers petitioned the elders again in 1839; as before they set forth the necessity for changes in the service and urged their claim for consideration. The points on which they laid particular stress were, the diminution of the prayers, a more convenient hour of service on Sabbaths and holidays, English sermons, a choir, and the abolition of the observance of the second day of the holidays. This petition met the same fate as its pre-

<sup>1</sup> Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History*, p. 371.

<sup>2</sup> Gaster, *History of the Ancient Synagogue of Spanish and Portuguese Jews*, p. 170.

decessors ; it was disregarded. The reformers now took a more decided step. Not wishing to secede from the congregation they requested the elders to grant them permission to erect a branch synagogue in the West End of London in the vicinity of their homes, in which they might introduce the desired changes while the mother synagogue continued along traditional lines. This well-intentioned plan, whereby an absolute break might have been avoided, was refused by the elders, because it involved an infraction of the first *ascamah* or rule of the congregation, which forbade, under pain of excommunication, the establishing of any house of prayer, or the holding of any divine service not of a domestic nature, within a radius of four miles of the synagogue<sup>1</sup>. Nothing remained now for those desiring reforms but to organize a new congregation, which they did, in connexion with some members of the German community who sympathized with their views. At a meeting held on April 15, 1840, by twenty-four gentlemen, eighteen of whom were Sephardim and six Ashkenazim, a reform congregation was organized. The reasons for doing so were set forth by the founders in the following declaration: " We, the undersigned, regarding public worship as highly conducive to the interests of religion, consider it a matter of deep regret that it is not more frequently attended by members of our religious persuasion. We are perfectly sure that this circumstance is not owing to any want of conviction of the fundamental truths of our religion, but ascribe it to the distance of the existing synagogues from our place of residence, to the length and imperfections of the order of service, to the inconvenient hours at which it is appointed, and to the absence of religious instruction in our synagogue. To these evils we believe that a remedy may be applied by the establishment of a synagogue at the western part of the metropolis, where a revised service may be performed

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

at hours more suited to our habits and in a manner more calculated to inspire feelings of devotion, where religious instruction may be afforded by competent persons, and where, to effect these purposes, Jews generally may form a united congregation under the denomination of British Jews." To give the movement definite shape, the following resolutions were adopted :

"That it is expedient to establish a synagogue in the western part of the metropolis and that it be designated the West London Synagogue of British Jews."

"That a revised service be there performed in the Hebrew language in conformity with the principles of the Jewish religion, and in a manner best calculated to excite feelings of devotion, and that religious discourses be delivered in the English language."

In the Introduction<sup>1</sup> to the prayer-book, adopted somewhat later by the newly-formed congregation, the following interesting statement is made in reference to the designation "British Jews" used in the address and resolution just quoted and in the title adopted by the congregation, namely, "The West London Synagogue of British Jews." The paragraph of the Introduction to which I refer may well be reproduced ; it states that "the differences which formerly existed between the Portuguese and German Jewish congregations, and which caused them to consider each other as half aliens in religious matters, have happily, by the progress of liberal sentiments, been removed, in as far as they obstructed that brotherly feeling which the unity of our religious system requires ; and the efforts of our newly-established congregation have been directed, we hope successfully, to the obliteration of every vestige of that useless and hurtful separation. We have discarded the names indicating a connexion between us, natives of Great Britain professing the Jewish religion, and the countries from which our ancestors immigrated, and we have adopted for our place of worship the sufficiently explicit designa-

<sup>1</sup> p. xv.

tion of 'West London Synagogue of British Jews.' In making this statement, it is expedient to notice that the term 'British Jews' has been chosen with a view only to efface the distinction now existing between the German and Portuguese Jews, and not in any way to constitute a new distinction, in a religious point of view, between the Jews of Great Britain and those of any other country."

The inclusion of the abolition of the second day of the holidays among the desired reforms indicates that one of the primary causes of reform in Judaism was life itself. The life of the Jews in the new time when they were participating in the activities of the world was altogether different from what it had been when they were a ghetto-community. The orthodox element who were arrayed against this reform had no other argument to offer than that it was handed down by tradition; they refused to recognize the fact that originally only one day had been observed, and that the keeping of the second day as a sacred day was in itself an innovation of a later time; the reformers, on the other hand, claimed that the exigencies of life in the modern time demanded the abolition of the second day, that there was no warrant or sufficient reason for continuing its observance, that if the requirement of one age justified its institution, the necessities of the present justified no less its abrogation. Religious institutions must shape themselves according to the needs of the age, if they are to continue as living forces and not as dead letters.

The movement to form the new congregation agitated the community greatly. While it was taking shape the chief rabbi of the German community, Solomon Herschel, and David Meldola, chief of the *Beth Din* of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation, addressed a lengthy communication to the London Committee of Deputies of British Jews, calling their attention to the reports that such a congregation was being formed, and urging them to use all their influence to prevent it. They contended that this movement, if successful, would disturb the peace

of the community and introduce the evil of schism; they pleaded for the observance of the law which had been the main bulwark and protection of Israel during twenty centuries: "Let us hesitate a long while ere we sanction any innovation, ere we tear down rashly any portion of the 'fence of the law' which is sanctified by the reverence of centuries and still more by the authority of those who created it." Sincere the two ecclesiastical chiefs undoubtedly were, but they closed their eyes to the fact that the *people* had begun to disregard the law, that the *people* had broken down "the fence" whereof they wrote so earnestly and pathetically. And when the people have taken such a step, when life has begun to make inroads, no legal or ecclesiastical provision, prohibition, or fiat will prove of much avail. The constituted authorities of the synagogue in England, as had been the case in Germany, were blind to the signs of the times. The onrushing waves of the ocean of life swept away many of the pickets of the fence of the law; this they would not or could not see; they attributed the reforms to wilful presumption, whereas they were really the result of the new currents of life that were flowing through the Jewish community.

The rabbinical address resulted in no practical measure. It was purely rhetorical but made no definite suggestions. The Bevis Marks congregation put forth a final attempt to stop the reformers from carrying out their plan by the suggestion that a branch synagogue be erected in the West End of the city where most of the reformers lived, but that the service in this branch synagogue be exactly like that in the mother synagogue. Naturally, this did not meet the requirements of the case, and the proposal was not urged. The reformers remained insistent and continued perfecting their plans for the new congregation. Many meetings were held by both sides. Partisan passions were aroused and bitter feelings engendered. On June 2, 1841, the Bevis Marks congregation called upon the other congregations of the city to join with them in the effort to prevent

such a flagrant violation of the traditional rules and laws of the faith as the programme of the new congregation intended<sup>1</sup>. Even this did not deter the founders of the new congregation from continuing in the work which they had undertaken. On August 24 they addressed a communication to the elders of the Bevis Marks synagogue, wherein they announced the fact that they intended to open a new place of worship and to introduce innovations and changes in the ritual; they enumerated these as follows<sup>2</sup>: the service was not to exceed two hours and a half; to make this possible the prayers had to be abridged; they had therefore revised the prayers; there was to be preaching in the vernacular; the offerings were to be abolished except on the three high festivals when voluntary offerings could be made upon the return of the scroll of the law to the ark; the second days of the holidays were to be abolished for "it is not the intention of the body of which we form a part to recognize as sacred days those which are not ordained as such in Scripture; and consequently they have appointed the service for Holy Convocations to be read on days only thus designated." They disclaimed, however, all desire to produce a schism in the community and declared their willingness and their purpose to advance the interests of the mother congregation as they had hitherto. It was in a truly religious spirit that they wrote that these views have been carried into effect, not with any desire to separate "but through a sincere conviction that substantial improvements in the public worship are essential to the weal of our sacred religion, and that they will be the means of handing down to our children and our children's children our holy faith in all its purity and integrity. Indeed we are firmly convinced that their tendency will be to arrest and prevent secession from Judaism, an overwhelming evil which has

<sup>1</sup> *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, V, p. 732.

<sup>2</sup> *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, III, 167. Supplement to *Jewish Chronicle*, Jan. 29, 1892, p. 18.



at various times spread among many of the most respectable families of our community. Most fervently do we cherish the hope that the effect of these improvements will be to inspire a deeper interest in and a stronger feeling towards our holy religion, and that their influence on the minds of the youth of either sex will be calculated to restrain them from wavering in their faith or contemplating for a moment the fearful step of forsaking their religion, so that henceforth no Israelite born may cease to exclaim, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One.' We contemplate encountering considerable difference of opinion, and even a strong prejudice against our proceedings, but we venture to hope that on further consideration, our motives and intentions will be duly appreciated and that those kindly feelings, which ought to exist between every community of Jews, will be maintained between the congregation which you represent and the small body whose views we have endeavoured to explain."

The Elders made no acknowledgment of this communication, but adopted a resolution denouncing the movement to open a new synagogue, and declaring the action of the promoters of the plan schismatic; but matters had gone too far and the denunciation proved futile. But, unfortunately, the affair did not stop with verbal denunciation and reerimination. As at Hamburg the ecclesiastical heads of the existing congregations issued a Caution against the new congregation and its prayer-book, dated the ninth of Marheshvan, 5602 (October 24, 1841), in which they said, "when we saw this great evil we arose and supplicated the help of God to remove this stumbling-block from the path of our people, our brethren of the House of Israel . . . we hereby admonish every person professing the faith of Israel and having the fear of God in his heart that he do not use or in any manner recognize the said book of prayer because it is not in accordance with our Holy Law and whoever will use it for the purpose of prayer will be accounted sinful." This Caution was

sent to all the congregations in England ; the congregations of Liverpool and Manchester disapproved of it and returned it, while the Plymouth congregation burnt it<sup>1</sup>. Evidently the terrors of ecclesiastical excommunication had become a thing of the past. In truth there were but few changes in essential teachings if any in the prayer-book which the new congregation issued in August with the title "Forms of Prayer used in the West London Synagogue of British Jews," and which was prepared by a committee consisting of Rev. D. W. Marks, Francis H. Goldsmid, Abraham Mocatta, and Moses Mocatta. In the excellent introduction to the book the editors, referring to the recent studies of Jewish scholars explained that the ritual of the synagogue represents a growth and drew from this fact the conclusion of the right and the necessity of producing a book of prayers that would appeal to their generation or as they put it, "it being thus evident that time has exerted its influence on these prayers, it is but meet that the exigencies of the time should again be consulted, when we have arrived at the conviction that the house of prayer does not exercise the salutary influence over the minds and hearts of the congregants which it is intended and capable to exert. History bears us out in the assumption, that it becomes a congregation of Israelites to adapt the ritual to the wants of its members ; and it must be universally admitted that the present mode of worship fails to call forth the devotion, so essential to the religious improvement of the people." The changes consisted mostly in abbreviations and eliminations whereby the service was shortened ; such sections as the *איזהו מקומן*, *במה מרליקין*, *יקום פורקן*, &c., were omitted ; the Amidah of the Mussaf prayer was shortened and contained only the *מעין הברכות*, the epitome of the benedictions. The most significant change possibly was the rendering of the Aramaic portions notably the Kaddish prayer into Hebrew. A few original

<sup>1</sup> Jost, *Geschichte des Judenthums und seiner Sekten*, III, 373 ; *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, III, 57.

prayers for special occasions were included. Petitions for the restoration of the sacrificial cult in the Temple of Jerusalem were eliminated although the prayers for the return to Zion and the coming of the Messiah were retained. The editors of the book were quite right when they asserted that the service they had adopted was altogether based on the existing ritual with the exception of the few slight changes mentioned, and the bull of excommunication of the ecclesiastical authorities was therefore an extreme step even from the standpoint of tradition.

The new congregation dedicated its synagogue in Burton Street, on January 27, 1842. David W. Marks, who had been elected secretary of the congregation, delivered the sermon; Mr. Marks had been secretary and Reader of the Law of the congregation in Liverpool. In looking about for a leader the founders of the reform congregation decided upon Mr. Marks, who had acquired a reputation as an able and eloquent preacher. The choice was fortunate indeed, as his distinguished career has proved. In his dedicatory sermon Mr. Marks defended the right of the congregation to introduce reforms, and defined the position of the congregation towards the Talmud denying the authority of the the oral Law and accepting the Bible only as authoritative<sup>1</sup>; he declared that it was not the purpose of the congregation to weaken their inherited faith, but to strengthen those great principles of the Law that their forefathers had heard at Sinai; they did not intend to abolish the old simply because it was old, nor yet to introduce the new merely because it was new; their only guide was to be the call of truth and the service of God in a manner that would satisfy the needs of their generation<sup>2</sup>.

Even before the Caution against the prayer-book was published, a meeting had been held at the residence of the Chief Rabbi Solomon Herschel, which was attended by the wardens and honorary officers of the different synagogues

<sup>1</sup> *A. Z. d. J.*, VI, 263.

<sup>2</sup> *Israelit des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, III, 81.

and by the members of the London Committee of Deputies of British Jews; at this meeting a declaration was read and approved as follows: "Information having reached me from which it appears that certain persons calling themselves British Jews, reject the Oral Law, I deem it my duty to declare that, according to the laws and statutes held sacred by the whole house of Israel, any person or persons publicly declaring that he or they reject and do not believe in the authority of the Oral Law cannot be permitted to have communion with us Israelites in any religious rite or sacred act; I therefore earnestly entreat and exhort all God-fearing Jews, especially parents, to caution and instruct all persons belonging to our faith that they be careful to attend to this Declaration and that they be not induced to depart from our Holy Laws." This was signed by S. Herschel, Chief Rabbi, and was accompanied by the indorsement of the ministers of the Portuguese congregation in these words: "We, the undersigned, fully concurring in the foregoing Doctrines, as set forth by the Reverend Solomon Herschel, certify such our concurrence under our hands this Twenty-Fourth of Ellul, 5601 A. M.

David Meldola,  
A. Haliva,  
J. Levy,  
A. Levy,  
A. L. Barnet."

Although written in Ellul (September) this document was not promulgated till the following January, the reason being given in these further words accompanying it, "The promulgation of the above Declaration has been delayed in the hope that there would have been no necessity to give it publicity; circumstances, however, now require that it should no longer be withheld from the community"; dated the 9th of Sebat, 5602 (January 22, 1842). The circumstances referred to were the forthcoming dedication of the synagogue of the reform congregation and its outspoken

attitude on the question of authority as given voice to a few days later in the inaugural sermon of its minister.

On January 19, 1842, the members of the new congregation addressed a letter to the Spanish and Portuguese congregation asking that their names be struck off the list of *Yehidim* of the old congregation<sup>1</sup>; they had delayed taking this step in the hope that some method of reconciliation would be found and that in time reforms would be introduced in the mother congregation. The break was now complete. Brother was arrayed against brother, whilom friend against friend. The traditionalists believed that the strength and salvation of Judaism depended on strict conformity in practice and belief to what had been handed down from the past, the reformers believed no less strongly in the right of private judgment in religious as in all other matters; each party held to its conviction with the tenacity typical of the English character.

The letter of January 19 resulted in drastic action on the part of the old congregation. The matter was considered at several meetings and finally it was resolved that the signers of that letter "had forfeited all claims to the rights and immunities which they enjoyed as members of our community, that the grants made to them of seats in our synagogue are rescinded and annulled. They are also declared ineligible to act in any religious office or to perform a *Mitzvah* of any kind in the congregation. Neither shall any gift or offering be accepted from them, or in respect of them, in any way or under any form whatever, during the time they remain in contumacy; they shall not be allowed burial in the *carriera* of our *Beth Haim* nor receive any of the religious rites and ceremonies paid to departed members of our communion<sup>2</sup>." Thus was

<sup>1</sup> *A. Z. d. J.*, VI, 263.

<sup>2</sup> This refusal of the Elders to permit the burial of the members of the congregation by the side of their beloved was a striking instance of religious bigotry; no words are strong enough to condemn such acts that have been performed so frequently in the name of religion among all

the *Herem* or edict of excommunication formally and solemnly pronounced against the reformers. On December 14, 1845, a committee was appointed to consult with the ecclesiastical authorities upon the validity of this edict of excommunication; for the friends and relatives of the excommunicated, who had remained faithful members of the mother congregation were disquieted because of the religious disabilities under which the seceders were laboring; besides the passing of time had somewhat softened the bitter feelings aroused at the time of the incident. After lengthy deliberations and protracted consideration the ecclesiastical authorities lifted the ban from the reformers on March 9, 1849<sup>1</sup>.

The organization of the new congregation led to other serious practical consequences. On February 2, 1842, the reform congregation, through a committee named for that purpose, and consisting of Francis H. Goldsmid, Moses Mocatta, and John Simon<sup>2</sup>, sent official notice to the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the president of which was Sir Moses Montefiore, the most prominent Jew in England and famous particularly because of his great services in connexion with the notorious Damascus affair of 1840, of the existence of the congregation and requested them to certify that Mr. Marks was secretary of the synagogue. This was especially important in order to give validity

sects. The new congregation was compelled to secure a burial ground of its own. It was two years and a half before it purchased its cemetery at Balls Pond. In the interval Mrs. Horatio J. Montefiore, the wife of one of the organizers of the new congregation, died. The application to the Elders of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue to permit her burial in their cemetery was refused. The new congregation entered immediately into an arrangement with the Maiden Lane Synagogue whereby, upon payment of fifty pounds per annum, they would be permitted to bury their dead in the cemetery of that congregation and have their minister officiate at the funeral. This was the only death in the congregation before the cemetery at Balls Pond was acquired.

<sup>1</sup> For a full account of the successive steps taken in the matter, see Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History*, p. 383.

<sup>2</sup> See Supplement to *Jewish Chronicle*, Jan. 29, 1892, p. 19.

and legality to the marriages performed by the minister of the congregation or, as he was officially called, the secretary. Every marriage had to be registered and naturally only marriages registered by one who was certified to be the secretary of a synagogue would have legal recognition and sanction. Sir Moses refused the request in a reply dated February 8, in which he stated that he had referred the matter to the ecclesiastical authorities of the Board of Deputies; on the following day he declared that he did not recognize the new organization as a Jewish congregation. The West London Synagogue, in its answer, dated February 14, called attention to the facts that the Board of Deputies counted no ecclesiastical authorities among its number and that every synagogue *de facto* has the right of existence in England without further ado or authority; hence they asked a second time to have Mr. Marks registered as secretary of a synagogue and therefore empowered to perform all the acts of an accredited head of a congregation. Sir Moses persisted in his former declaration and maintained the position he had assumed. The committee of the West London Synagogue in its reply deplored the fact that a man of Sir Moses' distinguished services should so use his position as to cause internal strife in the community; for if the attitude of the president of the Board of Deputies would be upheld it could result in but one of two things, a contest before a court of law or in Parliament. They would not, however, resort to these extreme measures for the present because they wished to avoid the notoriety that would result from the public airing of the internal strife in the Jewish community; still they would not hesitate to take one of these steps should any difficulty be encountered in the registration of marriages performed by their minister. Sir Moses answered this pronouncement by making public the resolutions adopted by the committee of the Board of Deputies on February 7, which declared that all religious matters were to be referred to the

ecclesiastical chiefs as heretofore; this was accompanied by the declaration of the ecclesiastical authorities quoted above to the effect that the new organization was not to be recognized as a Jewish congregation, and also by the resolution adopted by the whole Board of Deputies on February 14, in which they declared their entire approval of Sir Moses' course. Such couples as desired to be married by Mr. Marks had to be married first by the registrar to legalize the marriage which was thereupon solemnized by the minister according to the rites of the religion. In 1845 the West London Synagogue appealed to the Queen who on her part referred the matter to the then chief rabbi, Dr. Nathan Marcus Adler, the successor of Solomon Herschel who had died while the controversy between the two factions was still raging. How high the feeling ran even at this time may be learned from a remarkable action of Chief Rabbi Adler which was the occasion of the issuing of an address by the West London Synagogue on March 3, 1846, detailing the course of events since the congregation had come into existence; the action referred to was the refusal of the Chief Rabbi to permit the solemnization of a marriage between a member of the orthodox community and a girl whose father was affiliated with the reform congregation, and who herself had attended services there, unless the latter would promise to live in accordance with orthodox practice and never set foot in the reform synagogue.

The incident was closed by the passing of an Act of Parliament, on July 29, 1856, entitled "An Act to Amend the Provision of the Marriage and Registration Acts," the twenty-second section of which makes special mention of the West London Synagogue of British Jews, and empowers its certified secretary to register marriage ceremonies; the Bill also empowered the secretary of this synagogue to certify to the secretaries of other synagogues who would adopt the same ritual<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The Statutes of the United Kingdom and Ireland; 19 and 20 Vict. 1856, 674.



Thus the congregation reached the haven of peace after years of trial and struggle. Since then it has continued along the lines first laid down, but has not made much further headway in this direction. The confirmation ceremony was introduced at the very beginning, and on Sept. 26, 1859, an organ was placed in the second house of worship of the congregation in Margaret Street, which had been dedicated in 1849. Reform has made but little progress in England although preaching in the vernacular has been generally introduced. Only two other reform congregations have been established, namely in Manchester and Bradford. An agitation somewhat similar to that attending the formation of the reform congregation was witnessed in 1902 when the Jewish Religious Union was launched in London. This was the first positive forward step for religious reform taken in London by a body of Jews since the organization of the West London Synagogue, and its story will be recounted in the proper place.

DAVID PHILIPSON.

CINCINNATI O., U. S. A.